

THE CONVERSION



E.P.C. Welsh Drama Series, No. 33

# THE CONVERSION

*A Comedy in One Act*

*By*

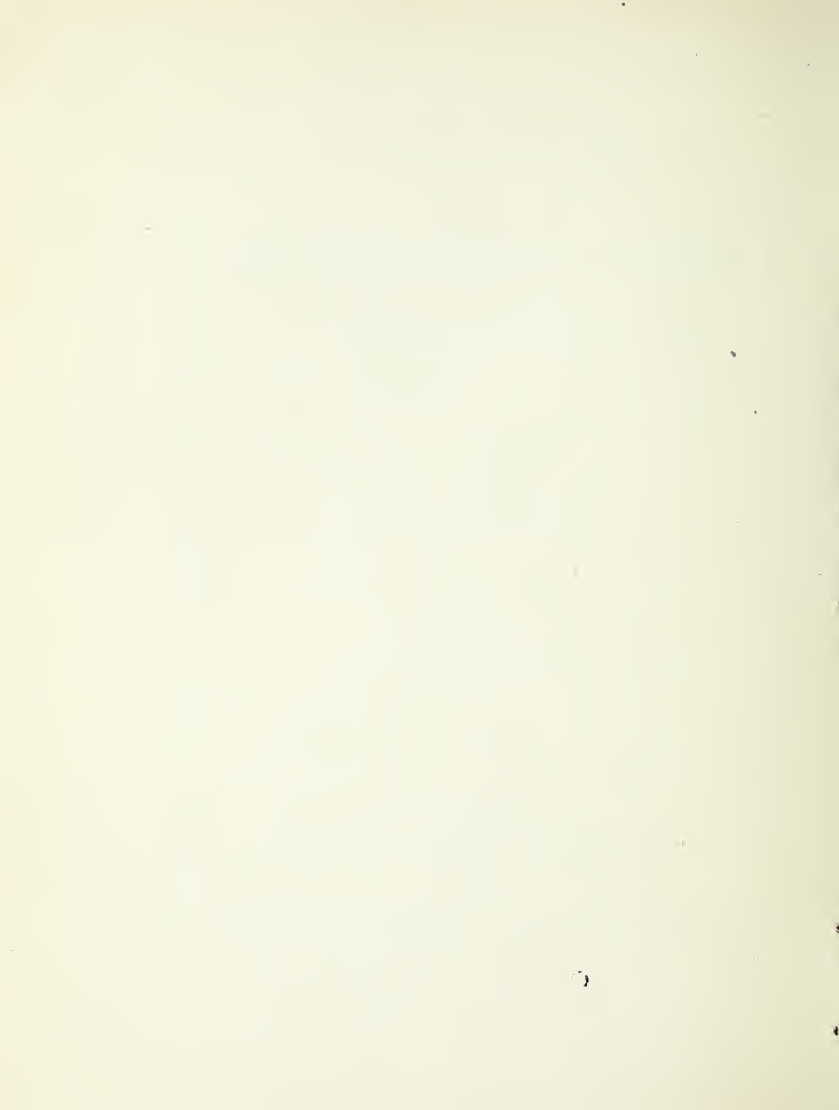
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**SCENE :** Eira's sitting-room in Titus Howells'  
House, Glamorganshire.

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**TIME :** Present day.

### CHARACTERS :

- THEOPHILUS WILLIAMS - A young minister.
- TITUS HOWELLS        -        - A well-to-do trades-  
    (Bachelor.)                        man.
- EIRA HOWELLS        -        - Titus Howells'  
  niece and ward.
- FLOSSIE JENKINS    -        - Eira's companion.



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[SCENE : EIRA'S sitting room, daintily furnished—pretty couch, chairs, piano, small tables, mirror on wall opposite stage, flowers, etc. Door R., door L.]

THEOPHILUS WILLIAMS, a good-looking young fellow, with the face of a student and the physique of an athlete, dressed in a black frock suit of clerical cut, and white tie, is walking restlessly about the room. Takes a flower—puts it in his buttonhole.]

THEOPHILUS (*stands in front of mirror, shakes his head*) : Out of place in a minister's coat. Confound the coat ! (*Puts the flower back into the vase.*) My solemn flock will only follow a black-sheep. I'd give something to preach in flannels, and see their faces lengthening out until they lifted the roof off the Chapel. (*Girl's laughter off R., he listens enviously, Dance music played on the piano comes to him from the room beyond. His feet move to the music, and then he dances round the room—stops suddenly—glances at door L., snatches up a book and drops into a chair.*)

THEOPHILUS (*his finger on a page of the open book, reads aloud*) : Praise her in the cymbals and dances—(TITUS HOWELLS *peers in door L.*)—the strings, and the pipe.

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**TITUS** (*a prosperous looking man of about forty, with a pleasant face and a jerky manner, who seems to catch himself thinking about forbidden things, and pulls himself up with a jerk and a disarming smile. Wears a well-cut brown lounge suit*) : My goodness ! Theophilus, if you want a pipe, come out here. (*Coming forward.*) But where is Eira ? Haven't you seen her yet ?

**THEOPHILUS** : No, Mr. Howells. She seems to be more pleasantly engaged. It is still Greenland's Icy Mountains with her.

**TITUS** : It is the Doctor's doing. " Your niece," he said, " is depressed, and must have cheerful society." (*Listening to a burst of laughter.*) Dear me ! they are very merry in there.

**THEOPHILUS** : She is moody enough with me.

**TITUS** : You might say " Moody and Sankey " —eh—Theophilus ? A double barrel trouble !

**THEOPHILUS** : Have you found the right sort of companion for her, do you think ?

**TITUS** : I had one from a Christian Home in London. I couldn't do more.

**THEOPHILUS** : I hope Miss Eira will benefit by the companionship. What is the young lady's name ?

**TITUS** : " Flossie." It sounds nice and soft, doesn't it ? like drawing your hand over velvet. You ought to make a friend of her, and get her to

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say nice things about you to Eira. Flossie will divert her, and you will convert her in the end, I'm sure.

THEOPHILUS (*shakes his head doubtfully*): She is more likely to pervert me. She shivers at the very name of minister.

TITUS: Well, you see, her father left it in his will that she must marry a minister, or not have anything after him, and you know what girls are. If you command them to do a thing, they will do something else.

THEOPHILUS: It is a pity there is any compulsion.

TITUS: Well, there it is! But I am thinking you are a bit too solemn for her. Not for me, mind you. Oh, no! I uphold solemnity in a minister, especially in a young one. But, you see, it is not me you want to please.

THEOPHILUS: Both of you, Mr. Howells—both of you. You are one of my deacons, and I look up to you as an example for my guidance.

TITUS: Ha! You will get on—you will get on! Always study your deacons, Mr. Williams. Have you told her how much money you have got?

THEOPHILUS: Yes. But she answered with a laugh, "The man is of more importance than the money."

TITUS: Just like her—very straight, always.

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(FLOSSIE *peeps in R.* She is a pretty, mischievous looking girl, about twenty-two, dressed in a short skirt, dainty shoes, etc. She comes in with a demure expression and a sedate step.)

TITUS (to THEOPHILUS, *jerking his thumb towards FLOSSIE*): Looks saintly, doesn't she? (*Aloud.*) This is Miss Flossie, Theophilus; companion to my niece. (THEOPHILUS and FLOSSIE *bow, and exchange glances.*) I will leave you to examine into her principles, and say if she is a proper companion for Eira. (*Looks anxiously at FLOSSIE.*) Be a good girl, Miss Flossie, and, remember, you are in the company of the minister.

FLOSSIE (*soberly*): Yes, Mr. Howells; I'll do my best to improve the occasion. (*Folds her hands and turns her eyes up.*)

TITUS (*aside to THEOPHILUS*): Try to get round her. She will help you with Eira. (*Exit L.*)

(THEOPHILUS and FLOSSIE *look at each other solemnly.*)

THEOPHILUS (*twiddling his thumbs*): Well, my girl?

FLOSSIE (*imitating THEOPHILUS*): Well, my boy?

THEOPHILUS: You musn't call me your boy.

FLOSSIE: You musn't call me your girl.

THEOPHILUS: What are you, then?

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FLOSSIE : A specimen in petticoats, about to undergo examination by a specialist in frocks. (*Points at his frock coat, and laughs.*) Well ! Here I am. Begin, please, Mr. Minister.

THEOPHILUS (*stares at her thoughtfully, and rubs his chin*) : You are a bit of a puzzle. I don't know what to think of you. But you are very pretty.

FLOSSIE : Touch the right button, and you' l drag all my secrets from me. (*Approaches THEOPHILUS.*) Do you know where the soul is, when it's at home ?

THEOPHILUS : No ! do you ?

FLOSSIE : Oh, yes. Let me look into your eyes, and I'll tell you.

THEOPHILUS : Shall it be a mutual study ?

FLOSSIE (*laughing*) : Kill two hearts with one glance !

THEOPHILUS : Two birds with one stone, I think you mean.

FLOSSIE : Take your last look, and die !

(*They look steadily into each other's eyes.*)

FLOSSIE : What do you see ?

THEOPHILUS : A thousand pretty imps flashing signals to a dull dog who doesn't understand them. May I ask what you see ?

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FLOSSIE : A dull dog, with a dangerous glint in his eyes, I only just got one peep, but it was enough.

THEOPHILUS (*with a sigh*) : Man is very imperfect.

FLOSSIE : Especially young ministers fresh from college. I lived near a college once, and my recollections are rather spotty.

THEOPHILUS (*hastily*) : My dear Miss Flossie, do not open the floodgates of memory. Always avoid the danger zone of youth and learning. I speak from experience.

FLOSSIE : Ah ! do you ? I should love to wander over the zone of youth with you, and see what tracks you'd left.

THEOPHILUS : They were all right.

FLOSSIE : Then there were none left ! (*Laughs.*) I should love to know the truth, though.

THEOPHILUS (*abstractedly, contemplating the ceiling*) : Love—ah—yes—love—it is divine !

FLOSSIE : Tommy rot ! It's human ; and the sooner you put it on that level the better for your chances with Eira. She doesn't want a saint hanging about her all day long. I'm going. (*Moves towards door R.*)

THEOPHILUS : Please stay. I have got such a lot to say to you.

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FLOSSIE (*strikes an attitude, sings*): Oh, stay with me, my darling, stay. (*Turns back.*)

THEOPHILUS (*in assumed husky voice*): And like a dream life shall pa-a-ass away. Ha! hum! Just so. It's a lovely song!

FLOSSIE: It's divinely crow-like—as you sing it. I really think I'm going to like you.

THEOPHILUS: I am glad we are to be friends. I have much need of an advocate with Eira.

(EIRA, a pale, beautiful girl, with blue eyes and golden hair, in soft clinging, graceful frock, enters R.)

EIRA (*with assumed gravity*): Flossie, dear, you are making a great noise. You seem to forget that the ministerial atmosphere should be tomb-like (*shudders delicately*) and repressive.

FLOSSIE: I was only trying to instruct the Reverend Theophilus in his duties to women.

EIRA: At his time of life, he ought not to need instruction. What have you to say for yourself, Mr. Williams?

THEOPHILUS (*nervously*): Oh—er—yes; your uncle wished me to ascertain this young——

FLOSSIE (*interjects mischievously*): Young specimen's——

THEOPHILUS: Young woman's principles, and I have done so—partially.

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EIRA (*her lips quiver with suppressed amusement*) : And as far as you have gone, how do you like them ?

THEOPHILUS : I fear I must reserve my opinion until I have gone a little further. The study of—of

FLOSSIE : Of man is girl.

THEOPHILUS : The study of metaphysics is simpler to a man than the study of girls.

EIRA (*impatiently*) : I hate metaphysics !

FLOSSIE : I hate physic of all sorts.

THEOPHILUS : I am afraid I am unfortunate in the way I express myself. You turn everything I say into ridicule.

EIRA : The stipulation in my father's will has prejudiced me against the white tie and the black coat. I am desperate, Mr. Williams.

THEOPHILUS : I don't understand.

EIRA (*turns away*) : Tell him, Flossie. I feel too weak to wrestle with the spectre that haunts me. (*Sinks into a chair.*)

FLOSSIE : She is hunger-striking, poor dear—starving herself because of her misery. I can't bear to think of it ! (*Dabs her eyes with her handkerchief. Pretends to sob.*)

(*Enter TITUS, with an anxious enquiring glance.*)

TITUS (*frowning*) : Well, indeed ! I hope Eira is coming to her senses. You are very patient with her, I must say, Theophilus.



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THEOPHILUS : I am drawing largely upon Job, Mr. Howells.

FLOSSIE (*aside, titters*) : Oh, dammit ! (*She is overheard.*)

THEOPHILUS (*turns swiftly to FLOSSIE*) : Eh, what ?

(*FLOSSIE explodes with laughter, and EIRA quivers with suppressed amusement.*)

TITUS : No explosives, if you please, Miss Flossie.

FLOSSIE : Oh, Joshua ! I wish I had a bomb, or something to wake you up.

EIRA (*gets up languidly*) : A bomb is the only cure for (*glances at THEOPHILUS, sighs*) some evils.

FLOSSIE : Yes, it would make them smaller.

TITUS : My dear Eira, I am doing my best for you. What else can I do ?

EIRA : Go to the Church Yard and pick a pretty spot under the trees to bury me in. I have done with the world.

TITUS : Do be reasonable, Eira. I offer you Theophilus, with his £500 a year, and you ask for the Church Yard !

EIRA : Only the little bit that the parish provides for us all. I would rather lie with the dead than live with the saints.

TITUS (*perplexed*) : What in the world are you talking about ?

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EIRA : Oh, Uncle ; can't you understand ? Can't you see that there is an impassable gulf between me and that (*indicates THEOPHILUS*) good young man ?

TITUS : You forget the golden bridge that spans the gulf, Eira.

EIRA : The golden bridge may dazzle your eyes, but not mine. I should shy at the bogey in the frock coat and white tie that stood on the bridge when I attempted to cross.

TITUS (*amazed*) : I don't know where you get your strange ideas from, if you haven't been reading some silly books.

EIRA (*rising, sinks down again*) : Help me, Flossie. (*FLOSSIE helps her to rise.*) I am very weak. Help me to my room.

FLOSSIE (*looking indignantly at TITUS*) : The hunger-strike is killing her, and you will have to answer for it at the inquest.

TITUS : The hunger strike ! Good gracious ! What next ?

(*EIRA totters out R., supported by FLOSSIE.*)

THEOPHILUS (*uneasily*) : Things are getting serious, Mr. Howells.

TITUS (*with assumed cheerfulness*) : Pooh ! it is only her nonsense. It is my belief that those two girls are as full of mischief as Eve was when

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she ate the apple. Did you notice Flossie—how she was enjoying herself on the sly?

THEOPHILUS : I noticed her smiling in a peculiar way.

TITUS : A pretty girl, isn't she? But I don't like that short frock. What is your opinion, now—as a minister—about such things?

THEOPHILUS : Well, Mr. Howells, as a minister I am bound to condemn a frock like that.

TITUS : But as a man, now—as a man?

THEOPHILUS : As a man, I think it has much to recommend it. True, it doesn't leave so much to the imagination as the old-fashioned frock. On the other hand, her stockings are very dainty. Of course, if they had been ugly and not set off to the best advantage on a shapely—a—er—limb, it stands to reason that they would be better under cover. But this is between ourselves, Mr. Howells.

TITUS (*winks*) : Yes, yes, Mr. Williams. In the meantime, we will keep our eyes open a bit wider, perhaps, than they think, and see a bit more.

(FLOSSIE *rushes into the room in a state of alarm.*)

FLOSSIE : Oh, Mr. Howells! Oh, dear! Oh, dear!—

TITUS : (*querulously*) What's the matter now?

FLOSSIE : It's Eira! (*Gasps.*) She—she—(*sways, steadies herself*). I—Oh, dear!

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TITUS (*staring at her*): Name of goodness! What is come to you? One would think there was an evil spirit in you.

THEOPHILUS: Pray be calm, Miss Flossie.

FLOSSIE (*sways*): Oh—I (*presses her hand to her heart*). She—she frightened me! (*Totters, falls into TITUS' arms.*)

TITUS: Good now! Here is a pretty thing! (*Looks at FLOSSIE.*) A very pretty thing. What is to be done?

THEOPHILUS: Hold her tight—press the blood back into her heart. If you feel unequal to it, I will do it for you.

TITUS (*looking at FLOSSIE*): I think I can manage—if you will go and get the brandy. You will find two or three medicine bottles in the cupboard in the other room, and they have all got stimulants in them. (*Looks at FLOSSIE.*) Don't run; you might fall and break the bottles.

THEOPHILUS (*with twinkling eyes*): I will take care. You are sure you are equal to the burden?

TITUS (*restlessly*): Yes—yes—I will do my best. Go! Go!

THEOPHILUS (*hurries L.*): I will fly!

TITUS: It will do very well if you—walk.

(*THEOPHILUS crawls L, and turns when he reaches the door. FLOSSIE steals a glance at TITUS through half-opened eyes, and quivers with suppressed*

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*merriment. She winks deliberately at THEOPHILUS. He notices it, and utters a surprised "Oh!"*

TITUS (*who hasn't noticed this bye-play*): What is the matter, Theophilus? Are you upset too?

THEOPHILUS: Just a little shock, Mr. Howells. (*Shakes the handle of the door.*) Confound the door! (*Opens door.*) Ha! (*Hurries out.*)

TITUS (*strokes FLOSSIE's hair*): What beautiful hair she has got. Poor little thing! She is trembling all over. It's the shock, I s'pose. (*Raises her chin, gazes at her rapturously.*) It is no wonder Adam forgot himself—if Eve was like Flossie. I would (*looks round the room quickly*) like to kiss her, for her kindness to Eira. (*About to kiss her.*)

(THEOPHILUS comes in, carrying a glass and medicine bottles on a tray. The bottles rattle. TITUS glances at him suspiciously, but is reassured by THEOPHILUS's assumed wooden expression.)

TITUS: You have been a long time, Theophilus, and I have found it a painful trial.

THEOPHILUS: Ah! indeed, have you now? (*Hands glass with brandy to TITUS.*) Nevertheless, you have been a happy martyr, Mr. Howells—judging by the colour in your face.

TITUS (*to FLOSSIE, holding glass to her lips, gruffly*): Drink it, can't you? (*FLOSSIE gasps, sips a little, falls back inert.*) (*To THEOPHILUS.*) About the colour in my face. I am rather nervous

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about it; it does make me giddy at times. (To FLOSSIE.) Have a drop more, Miss Jenkins.

THEOPHILUS (*gravely*): Afraid of apoplexy, are you? But you are rather young for that. There *might* be a more pleasant reason, Mr. Howells. (*Indicates FLOSSIE.*)

FLOSSIE (*almost convulsed with suppressed mirth, turns in TITUS'S arms, gives a gasp, and a low moan*): Oh—dear—Ti—! (*falls off in pretended unconsciousness.*)

THEOPHILUS: She is very familiar.

TITUS (*embarrassed*): She is rambling in her mind.

FLOSSIE: Wh—where am I?

THEOPHILUS: Safe in the deacon's arms.

FLOSSIE: Oh! (*Snuggles down.*)

TITUS: Do you feel very bad?

FLOSSIE: I am so frightened! (*Clings to TITUS.*) Hold me tighter, dear Titus. (*She winks covertly at THEOPHILUS, who turns his back to her, his shoulders shaking with suppressed laughter.*)

TITUS (*to THEOPHILUS*): Fetch some water to throw over her—quick! She is going off into her wanderings again.

(*THEOPHILUS rushes R., has his hand on the door handle.*)

FLOSSIE (*wriggles out of TITUS'S arms*): Come back! I am better now. A girl's bedroom is no

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place for a saint. (*Starts.*) Eira! I left her in hysterics. She is dying for want of food.

TITUS: You don't say so; Come with me, Theophilus. We will get food for her, and make her take it, or send her into the hospital.

(TITUS drags THEOPHILUS off L.)

(FLOSSIE watches them off, with dancing eyes and twitching lips, whirls round the room, and darts to R. Opens door, and goes in to EIRA. In a moment a peal of laughter is heard off R. The two girls come out quickly. They carry a powder puff, a box of chalk powder, and a hand-glass. FLOSSIE stands sentinel at door L. while EIRA dabs her face with the powder, until she looks ghastly. She leaves powder and puff on mantel piece.)

EIRA: If it wasn't for his black coat and white tie, I should feel awfully sorry for him, and want to—to—comfort him. (*Clasping her hands.*) Oh! if he'd only say "damn," or smoke, or smash something!

FLOSSIE: His education has been frightfully neglected.

EIRA: 'Sh! Here they are coming.

(EIRA throws herself into a chair, in a pose of dejected languor.)

(TITUS and THEOPHILUS come in L., bringing wine, jelly, etc. EIRA falls back in her chair with a long-drawn sigh.)

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FLOSSIE (*hurries to her*) : Poor dear. Isn't she frightfully pale.

TITUS (*offering wine to EIRA*) : Drink it, it will do you good. (*EIRA turns her head away from the glass, moans pitifully.*)

EIRA (*feebly*) : It would choke me.

TITUS : Better choke than die empty.

EIRA (*rises suddenly into a sitting position, stares into space*) : Look, Flossie ! Is it a star or a sunbeam ?

FLOSSIE : Poor dear, she's wandering again. She fancies she sees a motor car.

TITUS : Good law !

EIRA (*clutching FLOSSIE'S arm*) : He won't let me go out in it—for fear I'll scratch the paint. (*Sinks back with a sigh.*)

TITUS : You shall have my car and welcome, only you must eat some food first.

FLOSSIE : And let the Minister drive her, dear Mr. Titus.

TITUS : And make a scandal, I suppose. Not likely.

FLOSSIE : Tut ! the world is full of scandals ; one more or less doesn't count.

TITUS : It is a serious question, and I must talk it over with Theophilus. (*Links his arm in THEOPHILUS'S.*) Come, Theophilus, and let us have a smoke and a quiet talk.



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THEOPHILUS : I have never smoked, Mr. Howells, but if you think it will help us, I will join you—with more or less pleasure.

(TITUS and THEOPHILUS go out L., arm in arm.)

EIRA (*springs to her feet*) : Oh, Flossie ! isn't he hopeless !

FLOSSIE : Don't despair. His first cigar is certain to make a difference in him.

EIRA : I'm fearfully hungry. (*Eats jelly, and drinks a glass of wine.*) Don't give me away, or I'll never forgive you.

FLOSSIE (*lighting a cigarette*) : Not likely (*Smoking.*) If they ask, "Where's the jelly ?" point to me, and groan.

EIRA : They'll smell the cigarette, and wonder who——

FLOSSIE : The devil is smoking. (*Sniffing the air.*) Yes, they are certainly smoking in the next room. Ah ! these men. What dreadfully bad habits they've got. (*Listens.*) Someone's coming ! (*Throws cigarette away.*)

EIRA (*crossing R.*) : Who is it ?

FLOSSIE (*opens door L. an inch, and peeps out*) : It's the minister.

EIRA : Oh ! (*Steps into her room quickly and closes the door.*)

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(THEOPHILUS saunters in, smoking a cigar, stops, looks suspiciously at his cigar, puts it in his mouth, takes it out again, regards it doubtfully.)

THEOPHILUS : Do you object to my smoking, Miss Flossie ?

FLOSSIE : Oh, no. If you can stand it, I can.

THEOPHILUS (*smokes vigorously, coughs*) : I don't find it altogether—pleasant. (*Sits down in an armchair, looks a little dazed, the cigar drops out of his hand.*)

FLOSSIE (*pours out a glass of wine, sits on the arm of his chair, and holds the wine to his lips*) : Drink this, old thing.

THEOPHILUS : Thank you. (*Drinks the glass of wine at a gulp.*) Ah ! it goes very well with a cigar. I must try both together next time.

FLOSSIE : An excellent blend—like you and me. (*Springs up, with a laugh, puts the glass on the table.*)

THEOPHILUS (*glances at the table, takes up the empty jelly glass*) : So, the dear girl has broken her fast. I'm glad prudence has prevailed.

FLOSSIE : It was not Prudence : it was Flossie. Dear Eira is still a—"striking" figure.—I am sorry for you both ! If you would only come down to her level, or she would rise to yours, how happy you might be !

THEOPHILUS : What can I do ? I'll do anything to please her.

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FLOSSIE : Slip out of those vile black clothes, and be as Nature made you—(*stammers*) I mean dress like a reasonable being—like a sportsman.

THEOPHILUS (*reluctantly*) : I am a bit of a sportsman. I have played cricket for my college many times.

FLOSSIE : Ah ! how dreadful !

THEOPHILUS : And football.

FLOSSIE : Oh ! shocking !

THEOPHILUS : And raced a bit over hurdles—and done a bit of boxing—and rowing.

FLOSSIE : Oh, you dear fool, and you have said nothing about it. You have only got to revert to your old self to convert her.

THEOPHILUS : I wish I could. But I am under the eyes of the Chapel. I have got my flannels on under these things. I was playing a bit this morning behind the house, where nobody could see me—to keep my hand in.

FLOSSIE (*delightedly*) : Oh, this is frightful—frightful !

THEOPHILUS : Too jolly (*smiling*) frightful to last—worse luck ! Well, I'll confess everything while I am about it. I played a funny part in the Annual Opera at Llandovery College. The eccentric dance was grand !

FLOSSIE (*with mock solemnity*) : Oh, you wicked man ! (*Eagerly.*) Have you ever been drunk ?

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THEOPHILUS : I can't say I have been actually actual, you know.

FLOSSIE : But mellow ? Do say you have been mellow !

THEOPHILUS : Yes—perhaps—mellow—pulled up at the half-way house.

FLOSSIE : To think that you have been deceiving two innocent girls all this time ! Why didn't you tell us before ? It would have saved us much suffering.

THEOPHILUS : I never would have had the courage to tell you now, only for your winking at me when you pretended to faint, and Titus Howells held you in his arms.

FLOSSIE : Wretch ! I never winked—it was a spasm ! Besides, I don't believe you can dance ; and I know you sing like a crow.

(THEOPHILUS smiles at her—seats himself at the piano, sings a humorous song. While he is singing, FLOSSIE runs to R., opens the door, and beckons to EIRA, who peeps out and listens, with a gasp of surprise. EIRA disappears as THEOPHILUS ends his song.)

FLOSSIE : Bravo ! (Clasps her hands.) You can sing ; but I'll wager a kiss—as Eira's deputy—that you can't dance for nuts.

(EIRA plays dance music on piano off R.)

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FLOSSIE (*dances past THEOPHILUS, singing*) : Oh, Mr. Minister, will you dance with me ?

THEOPHILUS (*sings*) : Yes, my pretty Flossie, 'twill suit me to a T.

(*They dance. She pants and sinks into a chair, ripples over with laughter. EIRA stands at door R., her eyes dancing, but her figure rigid.*)

THEOPHILUS (*sees EIRA—stammers*) : Oh, Miss Eira !

EIRA : You may well look ashamed, sir.

FLOSSIE : Don't scold him, Eira. He did it for a wager ; and you've got to pay.

EIRA : Indeed ? If I have lost a wager, I will pay. I don't like to be in debt.

FLOSSIE : H'm ! (*Looks from one to the other doubtfully.*) I wonder !

THEOPHILUS (*hesitatingly*) : The wager was a kiss, Miss Eira.

EIRA : Then I won't pay.

FLOSSIE (*mischievously*) : If you won't pay, then I'll have to, as your deputy.

EIRA : Oh ! no ; you musn't sacrifice yourself for me. I'll pay—on one condition. (*To THEOPHILUS*) : Give up wearing (*points to THEOPHILUS'S coat*) that black badge of ministerial servitude.

THEOPHILUS : I would, willingly ; but there are the deacons, and they insist on their minister looking like a minister.

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EIRA : If you would rather please them than me, I have nothing more to say. (*Going R. slowly.*)

THEOPHILUS (*pleading*) : Miss Howells—Eira !  
(*EIRA goes out, with a stately step.*)

FLOSSIE (*following EIRA*) : I am so sorry, old thing. I have done my best for you ; but it seems that it was not to be. (*Goes out, sadly.*)

(THEOPHILUS *stands, brooding and unhappy, gazing at the closed door. Slowly he raises his head, and a smile flickers across his face. He takes off his black clothes, appears in flannels, whitens his face, using the powder and puff on the mantelpiece. Writes "poison" on a label in large red letters, and sticks it on a medicine bottle.*)

THEOPHILUS (*gazes at the label, smiles*) : Poison ! (*Smells it.*) Whiskey ! No matter ! It has killed many a better man. (*Pours a little into a glass, drinks it, places the bottle and the glass on small table near the couch, and then lies down at full length, very still, his eyes closed.*) I had better ring the bell. (*Gets up, rings, rearranges himself on the sofa.*)

(TITUS *comes in, and starts as he catches sight of THEOPHILUS stretched on the sofa like one dead. He approaches the sofa nervously, and stares down at THEOPHILUS.*

TITUS (*gasps*) : Oh, my goodness ! He is dead !  
(*He sees the bottle with the poison label. Shudders.*)

## THE CONVERSION

Poison! (*Rushes R., hammers at door, shouts*)  
"Eira! Flossie!" (*The door is thrown open.*  
*The two girls come out quickly, alarmed.*)

EIRA: What is it, Uncle?

TITUS (*points to the couch*): The minister has poisoned himself.

EIRA (*staggering to the couch*): Oh, no—no—no!  
(*Sinks on her knees by the couch, and fondles*  
*THEOPHILUS'S hand.*) Oh, Theo.—speak to me!  
—speak!

TITUS (*shakes his head sadly*): He will never speak no more.

FLOSSIE: Poor fellow! (*Begins to cry.*)

TITUS: There, don't cry. What is done is done. There will be an awful scandal. Ministers are not supposed to do such things. (*Walks up and down the room, agitated.*)

EIRA (*sobs*): And I loved him so, and he didn't know it.

THEOPHILUS (*opens his eyes, raises his head, smiles a little*): It was only whiskey, Eira.

(*EIRA gives a little scream, springs to her feet, looks wonderingly at THEOPHILUS, her hand pressed to her heart.*)

THEOPHILUS (*rises, approaches EIRA*): I have taken off my black coat and white tie, Eira. I am waiting to be paid.

## THE CONVERSION

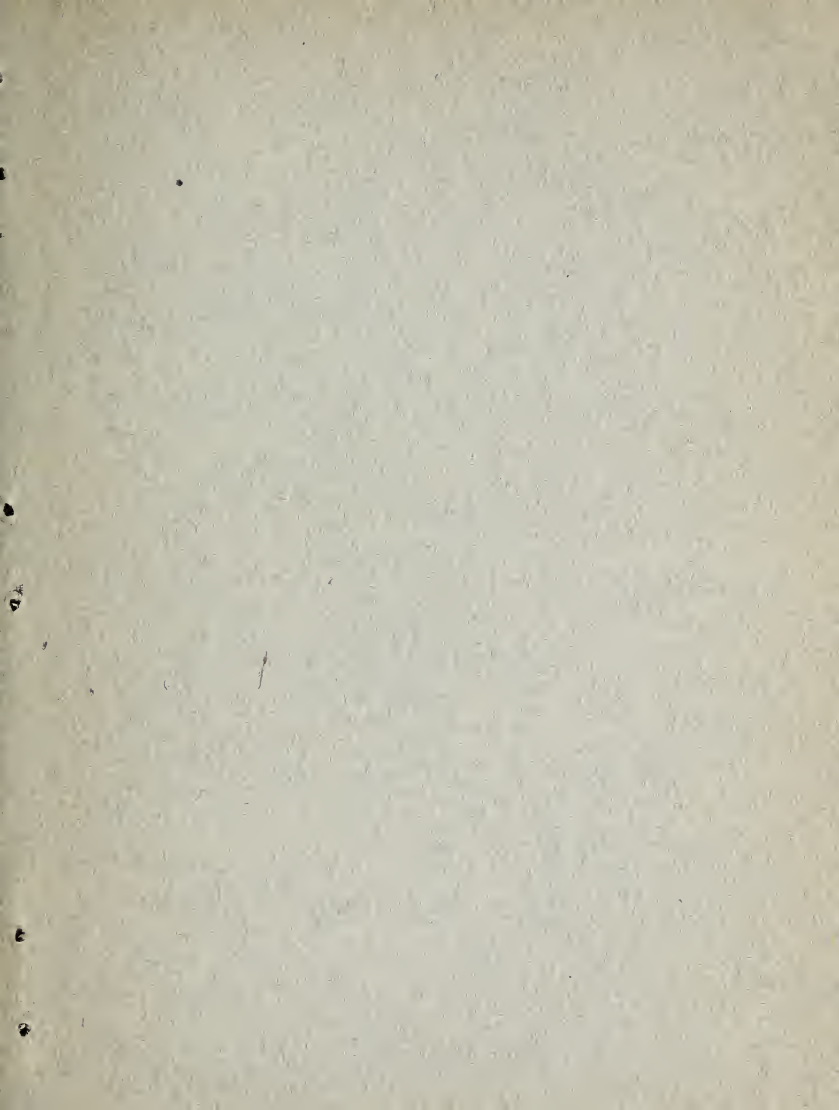
**EIRA** (*with a sudden laugh*) : Oh, you wretch !  
(*Impulsively throws her arms round his neck.*  
*He kisses her.*)

**FLOSSIE** : Oh ! this is too much. (*Falls gracefully into TITUS'S arms.*)

**EIRA** : Dear—dear, Theo. !

CURTAIN.







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## PLAYS BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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### THREE or FOUR ACTS.

- \*The Human Factor.
- \*The Schemer.
- \*The Second Son.  
Daughters of Eve.
- \*The Great Experiment.
- \*The Arrogance of Power.
- \*The Crash.  
Foiled (*for Amateurs*).

### ONE ACT.

- \*The Village Wizard.  
A Near Thing.
- \*The Conversion.
- \*The Epidemic.
- \*A Monologue for Me.  
The Girl from Cardiff.  
The Counter Stroke.  
A Pair of Bracelets.

By NAUNTON DAVIES, in collaboration with  
LEON M. LION.

- The Cobweb. (Four acts.)
- The Wanton. (One act.)
- Red Luck. (One act.)

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